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XXVII.—*On the Discovery of Cromlechs in Southern India.*
By R. A. COLE (*official papers, communicated*).

[*Read November 10th, 1868.*]

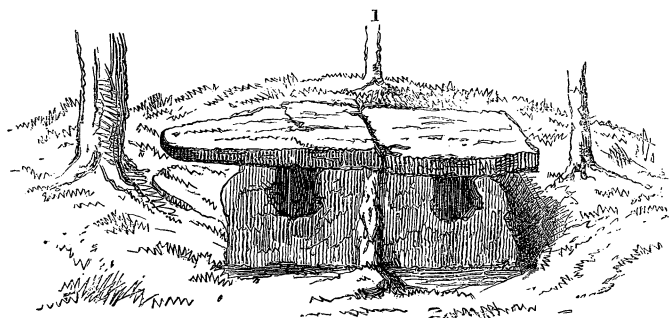
Coorg, March 4th, 1868.

I HAVE the honour to report the discovery of a large number of cromlechs, on some baué, or grass-lands, about a mile to the west of the town of Veerajapett, in South Coorg. The discovery was made by my assistant, Lieut. J. S. F. Mackenzie, in January last, in the following manner. A quantity of stones was required for certain bridges, and other works, in Veerajendrapett, and one of the native merchants offered to get the stones, if Mr. Mackenzie would allow him to remove them from the baué in question. Mr. Mackenzie inspected the locality, and found the remains of a great number of cromlechs, the stones of which had evidently been split up, and removed at different periods by the Wudders, a tribe of stone-hewers. The baué in question is much grown over with low brushwood, and, on pushing further on, Mr. Mackenzie hit upon a few large double cromlechs. On communicating this most interesting archæological discovery to me, I at once forbade the removal of any more stones from the locality, and directed the scrubwood and earth around the cromlechs to be removed, so as to lay bare the whole structure to its base.

Lieutenant W. Freeth, the Assistant-Superintendent of the Revenue Survey, then kindly undertook to make drawings and plans of this double cromlech, and of two others; and I have now the pleasure of forwarding, for submission to his Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, three coloured drawings of these cromlechs, as also twenty copies and plans of the same, lithographed at the Mercara Sudder Jail Press, from drawings by Mr. Freeth.

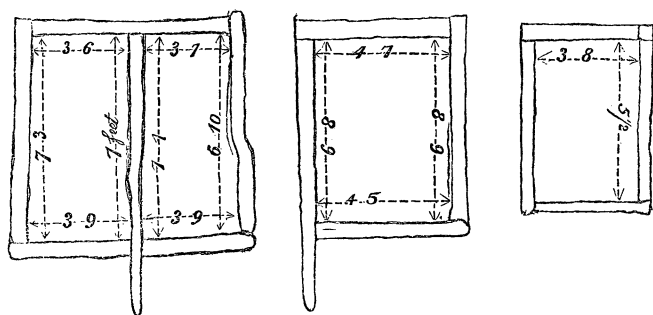
The double cromlech (No. 1) is formed by six large unhewn stones, surmounted by one large flat stone, thirteen feet long by nine feet nine inches broad, and about seven or eight inches thick. This top stone had been, apparently not long ago, chiselled, and split open right across the centre, from each side, so as to form four blocks, but most fortunately had not been removed, except a small piece at the back and to the left looking at the cromlech. The back was also formed by one large slab, as also each side. The front slabs were smaller, and divided by the large centre slab, which formed the enclosure into two compartments. These front stones have each a peculiar aperture, of an irregular segmental form, about one foot

eleven inches by four inches, at the top, and immediately below



Double Cromlech.

the superincumbent stone. The stones at these apertures are sharp on the inside, and present a bevelled appearance outside. The inner rim is so sharp as to lead to the conclusion that these apertures could not have been used for ingress and egress. The centre stone projects to the front two feet eight inches, and the top flag projects over the left compartment to such an extent as to afford shelter, like a verandah. This was, doubtless, accidental; but it is a curious fact that this shelter is so afforded on the side away from exposure to the monsoons, which now prevail. The interior measurements of the compartments are also given in the plans, by which it will be seen

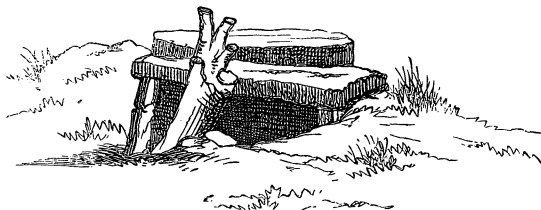


Plans of the Cromlechs.

that each compartment was about seven feet long, three feet nine inches broad, and four feet high,—each compartment was flagged by a large stone in each; these compartments were nearly full of earth, but nothing was found in them. Dr. Shortt, of Madras, who has opened many cairns on the Nilgiris, and other parts of the Madras Presidency, informed me that he had never seen or heard of a double cromlech of this description. This would add to the value of the present discovery.

No. 2 is a sample of a single cromlech, similarly constructed, of large unhewn and uncemented slabs of granite. It is six feet

2

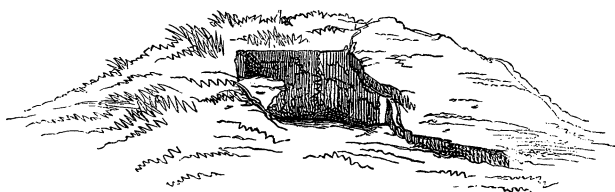


The second Cromlech.

eight inches long by four feet and a half broad and four feet high, interior measurement. The top stone had been broken and partly removed, and the stem of a very old tree was found growing out of it. Nothing was found in this cromlech.

No. 3 is a still smaller cromlech, found on another baué, about half-a-mile from the others. On this baué are to be found many large tumuli, which apparently contain many of these cromlechs. The front stone of No. 3 was just visible at the end of one of these tumuli, and I caused the earth above and around it to be cleared away, and the top stone was raised and

3



The smallest Cromlech.

made to slip over on one side. It was full of earth, in which we found fragments of earthen pottery, and small pieces of charcoal.

At the end of another tumulus, another cromlech was dug out, but we found the top stone had been removed, apparently very many years ago. In this also were found fragments of earthen vessels and pieces of charcoal, and also a small piece of a bangle. This bangle is much thicker than those in use at the present day, and the devices on it are in pale yellow, and somewhat similar in form to those generally to be found in the modern imitation Etruscan vases, goglets, etc. I showed this bangle to all the native merchants at Veerajapett, who declared that they had never seen one of such a description before. This bangle and fragments of earthen vessels were

sent in to the Commissioners, and are now in the museum at Bangalore, but I beg to suggest that they should be sent on to the Government with this report. The bangle is evidently of no modern date; but as the top stone of this cromlech had been removed, and Wuddurs had evidently been at work in the locality during the past fifty to one hundred years, it is possible that the bangle had once belonged to some dusky beauty of that tribe. It was found, also, only about a foot and a half below the surface of the mound, and just within the stone cist.

I have failed to discover any of those concentric rows of upright stones which have generally been found with such cromlechs elsewhere; but the fact of the Wuddurs having been so long at work in these localities, would account for the disappearance of these stones, which were probably first discovered and removed. It is worthy of note that these structures all face east and west. Very few of these cromlechs would appear to have had the segmental apertures found in the double cromlech; and, in fact, most of those now visible are much smaller, and would appear to be more like those short stone cists containing cinerary urns which have generally been found in the sepulchral mounds, both in Asia and in Europe, and even in Central America. As remarked before by me, these baués abound with such tumuli, some of which have evidently not been touched. It is in such alone that we may expect to find still more interesting relics of this almost unknown past period of the history of the world and of our species, and I would earnestly request permission to push on these excavations. Some of these tumuli would appear to run parallel to each other, so that when uncovered, these stone chambers would present the appearance of streets. The discovery of pieces of charcoal, and fragments of apparently cinerary urns, would tend to show that the conclusions drawn by modern archæologists are correct, viz., that these stone chambers were only used in sepulchral monuments. But my assistant, Mr. Mackenzie, has suggested, that it is an extraordinary fact that, when such durable and lasting monuments to the dead are to be found, no remains of the dwellings of those ancient Aryan races are visible in the same localities, so as to throw still greater light on the ethnical records of the past. Is it possible that these larger cromlechs forming regular well closed chambers, unlike those found elsewhere, were the dwellings, and the smaller stone cists and tumuli, the sepulchral monuments of these almost hypothetical races?

In conclusion, I beg to state that similar cromlechs and monoliths are said to exist in Kiggutuad, in South Coorg, and

also near Fraserpett, in East Coorg, in the borders of Mysore, regarding which I would propose to submit a separate report hereafter, soliciting the Commissioner's sanction to an expenditure of 200 or 300 rupees in making further excavations.

From the Superintendent of Coorg to the Secretary to the Commission for the affairs of Coorg, Bangalore.

Coorg, 22nd May, 1868.

SIR,—In continuation of my letter, No. 3301, of the 4th March last, I have the honour to report that, in accordance with the instructions of the Commissioner, I have caused eleven of the cromlechs, lately discovered in the vicinity of Veerajenderpett, to be excavated, and beg to submit the results of the explorations made by myself and my assistant, Lieutenant J. S. F. Mackenzie.

The parallel barrows, or mounds of earth, alluded to in my former report, though containing one or two cromlechs, were found not to cover continuous rows of these structures; but the cromlechs now excavated were situated below large mounds, and covered over with trees and dense brushwood, showing that they had not been touched by the hand of man for ages past. These structures consisted, like the others reported upon, of oblong chambers, the bottom and sides composed of large single slabs of unhewn granite, and surmounted by a large slab of the same description. The longest chamber was $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, by $4\frac{1}{4}$ feet broad, and 5 feet deep. The several dimensions were as follows:—

| No. | Length. | | | Breadth. | | | Depth. | |
|-----|----------------|-----|-------|----------------|-----|-------|----------------|-----|
| | Ft. | in. | | Ft. | in. | | Ft. | in. |
| 1. | 6 | 4 | ..... | 3 | 8 | ..... | 3 | 8 |
| 2. | $6\frac{1}{2}$ |  | ..... | 4 | 0 | ..... | 4 | 0 |
| 3. | $7\frac{1}{2}$ |  | ..... | $4\frac{1}{4}$ |  | ..... | 5 | 0 |
| 4. | $6\frac{3}{4}$ |  | ..... | 3 | 4 | ..... | $2\frac{1}{2}$ | |
| 5. | $5\frac{1}{2}$ |  | ..... | 3 | 3 | ..... | $3\frac{3}{4}$ | |
| 6. | 5 | 5 | ..... | 4 | 0 | ..... | $3\frac{3}{8}$ | |
| 7. | 6 | 0 | ..... | 3 | 3 | ..... | 3 | 3 |
| 8. | 6 | 0 | ..... | 3 | 0 | ..... | 3 | 0 |
| 9. | 7 | 0 | ..... | 3 | 0 | ..... | 4 | 0 |
| 10. | 6 | 3 | ..... | $3\frac{3}{4}$ |  | ..... | $3\frac{1}{2}$ | |
| 11. | 5 | 0 | ..... | $3\frac{3}{4}$ |  | ..... | 4 | 0 |

3. All these cromlechs had square or segmental apertures, which the natives always point out as a proof that these structures used to form the abodes of the pygmy race, described in their legends. Some have supposed that these apertures were made use of for the purpose of introducing the cinerary urns and bones of the members of the family into the sepulchral vault, as they died one after the other. I am inclined to this belief, as the urns were invariably discovered in each corner, and

often piled one upon the other, and these openings are always at the top of the front slab, and immediately below the superincumbent slab. These doors, or apertures, were generally found to face towards the east; but strange to say, one was found facing to the north, and a few to the west. They were $1\frac{1}{2}$, $1\frac{3}{4}$, and 2 feet wide.

I am glad to be able to state, that the excavations resulted in the discovery of several antique-shaped urns and pots, composed of thick, red and black pottery, apparently highly glazed; some are on four feet, and some are tripods. Lieut. W. Freeth, the Assistant-Superintendent of the Revenue Survey, has kindly sketched and lithographed a group of these urns, and his



Pottery from the Cromlechs.

lithograph copies attached will convey a better description of these antique vessels than any words of mine can do. They are all full of hard earth, apparently rammed in by the rainfall of successive monsoons. I had some of the damaged vessels broken up, and the contents carefully sifted, but could not discover any traces of bones, whether calcined or not. This would lead to the belief that these vessels had not been used as cinerary urns. The small fragments of charcoal were generally found in the earth, inside the cromlechs and smaller cists. Some pieces of iron weapons were also found in these cromlechs, the larger of which appears to have been a spear or large javelin, and the others, arrows and hilts of daggers.

There were no concentric rows of stones round these cromlechs, as generally found elsewhere; but I found that the cromlechs at Fraserpett had distinctly such rows of upright stones round each. These look as if they had been tampered with, though not for many years past; but I will cause them to be carefully excavated next month, and will submit a separate report on the results. I have, etc., etc.

(Signed)

R. A. COLE, Superintendent.

(True Copy.)